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Address on the management of mind

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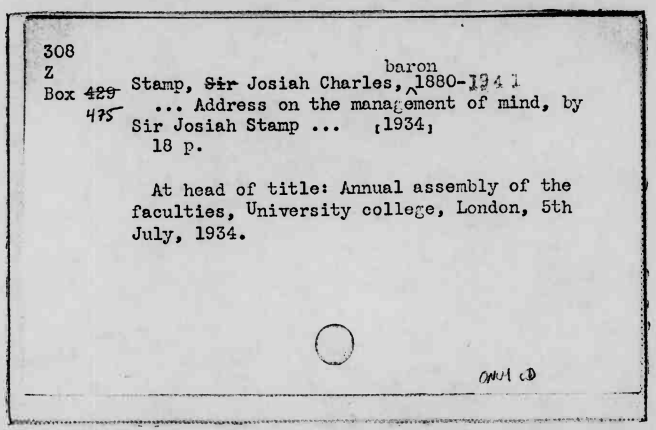

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ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FACULTIES,

University College, London,

5th July, 1934.

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ADDRESS ON

THE MANAGEMENT OF MIND,

by

SIR JOSIAH STAMP, G.B.E., LL.D., D.Sc., F.B.A.

Gift of
Prof. E. R. A. Seligman
12-23-37

ADDRESS BY SIR JOSIAH STAMP.

The Management of Mind.

If it be the object of today's function to celebrate the results of long application to study, and to congratulate ourselves on the outcome of it, I can well imagine that the solemn announcement of my subject, *The Management of Mind*, will fill you with the gloomiest forebodings. According to your mood, you will have the worst anticipations of metaphysical obfuscations about the relations between phenomena and noumena, innate ideas and the thing in itself; or psychological excursions into behaviour, and habit, and will; or phrenological analysis into the balance of separate mental functions; or theological dissertations on self-mastery; or logical exercises for reducing your knowledge to syllogisms in Barbara; or even a lecture on Pelmanism, cramming, and other training for the memory. Whatever it is, it will look very much like more work, something to be added to your already overburdened curriculum, for which you will not give me thanks. But let me hasten to reassure you that I really come as a friend to suggest a lightening of your load, or at least a repacking of it periodically so that it sits more comfortably to the shoulders of your spirit. "Mind"! I shall be almost as equivocal in my use of terms as the classic indexer who put under "Best, Mr. Justice: His great mind, p. 351," and when you turned to p. 351 you found that "Mr. Justice Best said he had a great mind to commit the witness"!

Most students have settled upon certain methods of study, memorising, notetaking, underlining, revision, more or less accidentally, I suppose, in the course of their school life, according to the prevailing habit and custom, and without any conscious experimentation to see whether those methods are the best adapted to their own individual minds. Now those methods have become acquired as natural, and it would need a very conscious effort to displace or modify them, so conscious as to be self-conscious and take their minds off the main issues. Now, today, the curriculum is so exacting that there is no time to explore processes of thought and get new tools, or sharpen old ones. The time for that seems to have gone by.

And yet a student who stands aside and abdicates all control over his mental processes and conscious direction of them, runs a great risk of letting his faculties get into bad habits, and become ineffective for his main purpose. Will you agree the mind must be disciplined to some extent, without making a slave of oneself? Very good, that is all I ask you to concede. For if management of mind is desirable, on what principles does it proceed, and for what ends? I think we must take the ends first, because on them will depend the means of locomotion and the direction. You may not all be ready for this—perhaps are like the Irishman who, when asked by the fugitive the way to a certain seaport, exclaimed: "Ah, if I was going there, I shouldn't start from here at all."

Nearly all social observers agree that modern developments of life—cheap literature, easy travel, the broadcast, and the cinema—have multiplied the points of sensation, emotion, and interest so rapidly that the power of mental response of the ordinary person is overtaxed, and he tends to flit unsteadily from attraction to attraction, only half savouring real enjoyment and thorough realisation in a continual succession of mental excitements. There is so much to see and do, and we want to see and do it all, and to pack life as full as it will hold. In a few hours' motoring we can see more beauty spots and places of interest than our grandfathers could see in the holidays of a lifetime. We can even be like the four American tourists, in *Punch*, who dashed up to the cathedral in their car, and Sadie, descending, exclaimed: "Pop, we've got eight minutes—you do the inside, and we'll do the outside." Is it better to settle down and absorb a few well-chosen ones or to sip hastily and superficially at many? Is it better to read a few carefully selected spacious and slowgoing books, or to pass voraciously over a large number of peptonised guides to knowledge? Can we *really* survey mankind from China to Peru? Is the impression on our mind for a given mental effort for a given time, a constant cubic quantity, as some psychologists suggest, so that extension of area can only be secured by reducing the depth? And does ultimate value and enjoyment depend on area only or thickness only? Perhaps that analogy is not accurate enough. There may be two minds, with equal area of survey and equal depth of attention over the same range of life's objects of interest and sensation—their cubic content of experience is the same and similarly distributed—yet there is difference of *quality*, and one mind has lived in an intensity that the other knows not. There is a *vitality* which counts.

Now the greatest problem facing the individual mind today is the deliberate choice between innumerable small, rapid impressions, tasting everything that comes, and a narrower range of experience, balanced and calculated to equip and to satisfy. No man today is truly educated who is not facing this problem, on natural lines, and learning to manage his mind. A leading article in 'The Times' recently put my point admirably. After dealing with the absence of purple patches in platform eloquence and conversation, it goes on: "All this makes it the more remarkable that in life itself, as distinct from talking about life, the purple patch has a greater vogue than ever. The young pre-eminently and naturally, and their elders at no long interval, tend to measure and value life by the special opportunities which it brings of excitement and enjoyment. Most of us live not so much from day to day as from occasion to occasion.... But it is essential to keep a right perspective. We must see the purple patch for what it is and should be, the exception and not the rule. It is fatal to be blind to the truth that, if life were one unbroken series of purple patches, we should grow sick of the sight of them and think of a sandy desert as a treat. A life of nothing but excitements would quickly lose its savour and become as dull as ditchwater. The incessantly stimulated nerve soon ceases to respond at all. There is nothing so lacking in sparkle as the exhausted pleasure-seeker. . . . Subordinated to a greater end, the purple patch is not only permissible, but necessary. Its function is to be the rare and refreshing inspiration to a better and brighter handling of ordinary things."

The truth is, that the best life, the life most worth living, is ninety per cent. routine, and only ten per cent. excitement, novelty, and change. The great thing is that the routine shall be *good* routine, well chosen, determined, on the highest economical level, with short-distance and long-distance aims in harmony and worthy, never stale, but revised and fed from new sources of energy. A routine on which time and effort and conscious choice have been spent, then faithfully adhered to, is a great time-saver and energy-conserver. There is nothing worse for the spirit than having to make decisions every day on the things that ought to be regular, and

above (or below) the conscious mind—agonising decisions about the time to get up, and how one shall divide the day, and what aimless aims shall distract our attention. Such decisions should be neither whim nor strain. As many *lower* decisions ought to be made for us unconsciously by our predetermined course or habit as possible, to leave our conscious minds free for higher decisions. Business progress consists in making ever higher and better routines—things that once had to be determined *ad hoc* and afresh at every recurrence, reduced to the form and order of scientific and specialised experience. There is nothing worse for the mind than to fritter its power away in the apparatus of working.

For all the days to be filled with unrelated excitements, pleasures, or special experiences is like a Xmas pudding made with the most attractive and varied ingredients, but insufficient flour. It will fall to pieces by its own richness. To superimpose sparingly the elements of emotional change upon routine is to enhance the value of both.

The discovery of this routine is the first object of the management of the mind. And not everyone who has a routine task to do has discovered it. For, like all other knowledge worth while, it can be improved and extended by conscious examination and experiment. It is worth while to take time to study our own mental habits, processes of working, and special aptitudes. It is even worth while to try alternatives, merely as processes, and assess the results carefully.

In the second place, the mind is a sensitive and powerful instrument, on which our whole individual usefulness and effectiveness depends. If it has one way that is better than another, if it has a grain, or a temper, what is it, and how do we discover it? We may desire to maximise its effectiveness—it has many parts and faculties—these can be in uncontrolled competition and confusion, or we can introduce a co-ordination, a principle of management. The mind is our means of acquiring knowledge, of forming opinion, of influencing others, and of satisfying our own mental demands. If the end of knowledge is action, as Huxley and others before him declared, somewhere a sense of direction and means to ends must be introduced. *This is management of mind.*

Again, all our thinking, however abstract, is the individual product of our resources and environment. We may say we are

unbiassed, but every one of us has a personal equation, an inherent constant, and it is as well we should know it and assess it, even if we cannot dodge it or subtract it, for when in contact with society it is as well we should allow for it. We ought not to get rid of it, otherwise our work will be lacking in force, in inspiration, and in abandon—it will become frigid, objective, and over-scientific. The deliberate separation of emotion from ratiocination is impossible if we are to expect the birth of creative ideas. This is one of the hardest achievements of the management of mind.

In the fourth place, management includes the transmission from the mind to others by words in writing and speech. Just as the manager of a business has only half done his job if he produces excellent articles by the best processes under the best personnel, and has not considered transport, delivery, and what customers actually want and can buy, so the inarticulate and word-bound thinker of the highest quality has only begun when he has thought a good thought, if he cannot get it over into the fermenting stock of general ideas and practices.

Let us look first at the conscious control of mental processes, or, as I prefer to call it, the intelligent construction of mental routine. Graham Wallas tells how, as a young teacher of 23, preparing boys of eleven and twelve in Greek and Latin for scholarships at the big public schools, he made them repeat, not mnemonics for roots and rules, but a kind of catechism, "My duty as a member of this class is to acquire correct intellectual habits," in order to make them process-conscious. "These boys are now grown men," he said, "and I have never had any reason to think that the effect on them of such early intellectual self-consciousness has been other than good." To have the right utensils, to keep them sweet, and keen, and clean, is the first contribution to good workmanship. What are these processes that need management, these mental habits to be controlled? The improvement of memory is at once conjured up by all as the most significant, powerful, and important. An American investigator who wrote on *How to Study* said that nearly every student he approached thought of improving the memory, or memorising, as its nearest synonym. It *is* important indeed, for an armoury of facts is a useful adjunct to every operation, and no one should despise it, or use his memory at less than its best power. But too much may be made of it, especially if factual

recital is mistaken for mental power or process. Sometimes this wealth of memory positively inhibits freedom of thought. It is a fine thing to see a physically developed giant perform, unaided, great feats of strength, self-contained, dependent on no artificial aids or artifices. *Very useful indeed—in the Stone Age.* But that kind of development is not calculated to achieve the highest results in society today. It is not often wanted. It is better to be punier, and even sicklier, and yet to know which button to push, which lever to pull, to light dark places, start great dynamos, throb the power houses of the world. In like manner most of the intellectual work in the world does not require to be done by brain on desert islands, isolated from accumulated knowledge. You will be mentally more powerful if you know *where* to find knowledge instantly than if you stuff your head with facts—*after* the examination, at any rate! The man who knows his way about a library is more effective today than the man who knows twenty of the books by heart. General knowledge papers are good, but, if it were practicable, I would hand the candidates the question paper, and set them loose in a large general library, and see who could find his way around that world of knowledge most effectively in a given period of time—a new kind of treasure hunt. To know *where* to find, and *how* to use, is worth real study and effort; it has a technique of its own. I would have examination papers in it. First, given the library catalogue and an hour allotted to the task, to which section of books would you turn as most likely to give you the answers to the following problems, *a*, *b*, and *c*? Second: "Here are a hundred volumes. Say how you would enter them if you were compiling the catalogue of a library." To know where personal storage of facts should end, and personal knowledge about where facts are stored should begin, and how to allot your time between the two courses, is the first beginning of management of mind.

But let me not belittle memory. One cannot carry a library about, and the ready presentation of facts is so valuable, that we should *know our own minds* in this sense. But how many have performed deliberate experiment with their own minds? You may be following some memorising, Pelman system, of association and repetition. It is to be hoped that you really do so to an extent that is worth while. But even that can be profitably varied for different minds. To some visual

effort is important, to others aural. I can listen, but to *learn* I like to see the matter in black and white, the visual image, and I can often remember the exact place on the page where the vital fact lies. My friend Owen Young likes to have matter read to him, then read again, and his critical faculties are at their best when listening. Lord Oxford said in his Memoirs: "Our two rhetoricians, Lloyd George and Winston, as it happens, have good brains of different types. But they can only think talking: just as some people can only think writing. Only the salt of the earth can think inside, and the bulk of mankind cannot think at all." Some *repeat*, till it dents the mind; others buttress round with associational ideas. But my experimental control has yet to come if that is all. If you know the methods by which the Institute of Industrial Psychology has reached many of its most effective results, you will get hold of my analogy. Some process—typing, filling chocolate boxes, threading—is tested over a measured time under varying conditions—the first hour, the last hour; before the break, after the break; before tea, after tea; with music, without music; on Mondays, on Fridays; in solitude, in company; changed and unchanged; and the results are compared for efficiency and waste. Much is learned about the best and least exhausting conditions—rest pauses, accident liability, and welfare generally. Before we construct our routine, and then lean our whole life's conduct upon it, let us, as Plato says, "Put thought in it." For example, take similar or parallel lists of facts, dates, events, vocabularies, and memorise them your own way, but under different conditions—at the beginning of other mental work, at the end of long thinking; in small instalments, in large; with revisions at daily intervals till perfect; at two-day intervals, at weekly intervals. Put the material aside for three months, or for six. Then repeat, and see which course has left the best final result on the brain. Each list must be carefully noted, with the conditions under which it was memorised. You will find surprising differences in effectiveness, *but when you have found your optimum point, use it regularly and put it into your routine.*

In a like manner, but less simple, study analogous problems of equal degree of difficulty, under entirely different conditions—one, say, by careful note-taking of a few sources, another by oral lecture, another by wide reading and essay writing. Then, after

a sufficient interval, put yourself through an examination and compare the results. Every timber has its grain, every metal its temper; so every mind has its characteristic stroke or beat, and the first essential of management of mind is to discover our own and make a routine of it.

I have not thought particularly of passing examinations, and cramming is rightly condemned as an end of knowledge. But don't be superior or snobbish about it. If examinations have to be passed, and are a part of a system, we may as well consider *their* grain too. Practice answering under examination conditions in order that the mind may work freely, and not strangely, or self-consciously, when the time comes, frightened of the clock, fidgeting between brevity and length; focus attention on what the examination is most likely to require, and put that first, for the time being at any rate. For I believe preparation for examinations may be an important step in the management of the mind if it induces conciseness, arrangement, and proportion. Even the despised cramming may have its virtues in practical life, for the ability to load up quickly, then unload for the job in hand, and then clean up ready for the next task, may be very useful in business, where the thoroughgoing student, who scorns the cram, and learns as if for eternity, may find the chance has gone by him. So I do not wholly decry what is indicated by "cramming," but I would stop it spreading over a whole examination by every means in my power. In my model examination I would reserve one corner, "the crammer's paradise," where he could display the virtue of his defects. The candidate would make a statutory declaration that, in the subject chosen, he had never read a book, heard a lecture, or made a note until within three weeks of the examination. His effort would be the supreme chance of the mental sponge. Original thinking would be heavily marked down. This would be so successful that I should then be entitled to have another paper called "the crammer's horror," or the "joy of memory," in which the candidate would make a statutory declaration that, for this subject, he had not looked at any notes or books or heard any lectures for the space of twelve months prior to the examination day—a true test of ultimate, absolute, residual knowledge.

Let it not be thought that in my zeal for reform I condemn

examination knowledge, even as it stands. The discipline it represents is a real contribution to management of mind. Moreover, the examination sets a goal and a tone, and puts an end to diffuse, "interesting" reading, dilettante interest, passive mentality, and work at half-strength. I often say that one never really knows much about a subject until one has either taught it, written a book about it, or worked for an examination. And it remains true that unless we have been driven into our deeper reserves of mental power, and run on our second wind, so to speak, we have not *exercised* our minds. Read William James on *The Energies of Men*.

Now the discovery of the best technique of our own minds is the first element of management, and the beginning of a fine routine. But we ought to find out how others do their best work, and make experiments in their medium too, for even a batsman with characteristic strokes of his own, or a golfer with an individual swing, can watch others who do better, and, perhaps, improve his personal style. Conscious examination and comparison, and controlled experiment, are essential to self-knowledge. There are many books on memorising, but no one should fail to study Graham Wallas's *Art of Thought* to discover how much mental power lies in the establishment of good processes of preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification, as he calls them. Ernest Dimnet's *Art of Thinking* is valuable in a different way. You will all read your own Professor Cyril Burt's new book on *How the Mind Works*.

Some of us are repelled by memory systems, and knowledge becomes cluttered up with mechanisms. I open at random a popular complete guide to memory, and I am invited to remember "maison," by "mason," who has a lot to do with building a house. Much encouraged, I persevere, and the next is "fromage," a tougher proposition. Here I am told to think of it as "from age," when *cheese* naturally follows! A person boasts that he learned the succession of the Kings of England in ten minutes by annexing the names of the successive monarchs to the successive rooms and principal parts of his own house. There is no limit to the wonders of this manual, but they fail to stir me, and my memory will go on feeble and dissociated to the end. Not for me that Richard I. suggests The Chivalrous Crusader, which, by a scale of letters and numbers, tells me 1189, or Charles II., as Public Satisfaction, gives 1660, and George IV., Naughty Sovereign, makes 1820.

Memorising is like building. Never go to all the trouble to put up the walls unless you will have time and patience to put on the roof. Once when Susanna Wesley was teaching her eldest son Samuel, her husband said: "Sukey, I wonder at your patience. You have told that child the same thing twenty times." She replied "I should have lost all my labour had I satisfied myself by mentioning it only nineteen times—it was the twentieth that crowned the whole."

Good memory, like patriotism, is not enough. It may go with bad judgment and feeble intelligence. Some of the best arithmeticians, with the minds of bank cashiers, are not mathematicians, and many mathematicians have been arithmetically inaccurate. There are different orders of memory—the bridge mind, which can remember intensely for a brief, but adequate, period a narrow range of facts; the retentive memory which can give forth long passages of poetry; the scientific memory, which retains principles and their vital illustration; the inconsequential memory, that treasures trifles and misses the haystack. The best memory work is based on principle—not the memorising of unrelated details by sheer brute force, but the natural way of grouping them round classification or principle, when they adhere of their own accord. The memory is relieved from the burden of non-significant facts if well assimilated principles are allowed to do the selection work without much hindering the mind. Principles are the great labour savers.

Whatever we may do with memory, it is limited, and we must be careful and discriminate in what we feed into it. The art of reading, and the degrees of attention given, are the second great factor in management of mind.

It is said that nearly all books contain a large amount of matter which is not strictly necessary to the main theme, and the same problem can really be stated in a much shorter space. The student makes even more abbreviated and bovrilised extracts, and reduces whole volumes to a few pages of notes, which then stand for him in the *place* of the whole. Does this mean that a seven-hundred-page guide to all knowledge is all we need, and we can abolish libraries and universities?

Pelissier's potted plays were only interesting and amusing because we knew the whole, and could admire the art of abbreviation.

Nothing is duller than a ten-line biography of salient facts, than a summary of events, than a synopsis of a play, than the "plot" of a novel. Your extract of knowledge in your notes is only valuable to you because *you* have the diluting and human context; it is the mere shorthand of *your* mind, valueless to me. Whenever art is valuable and persuasion necessary, or atmosphere important, knowledge needs stating with appropriate spaciousness in planes of perspective in space and in time. This preamble may be too long drawn out, as we tend to think *now* of the non-essential matter of Scott's novels, but some amount of skilful and delineatory accessory is necessary for the proper assimilation and appreciation of the hard central theme. It is to the mind what "roughage" is to the digestion, and stands as a carefully devised menu would to the same protein and vitamin content in a few pellets. The careful balance, therefore, of less essential matter to the unescapable and vital is the problem of every writer. He must produce what is the most appropriate to the majority of the *intended* readers. But every individual reader has his own requirements, and, therefore, it is not strictly necessary, or even desirable, that every reader should plod with equal attention and conscientiousness through every page. If you have read a dozen books on the gold standard, and a thirteenth comes your way, you would be a fool to think that you were dishonest if you did not plod over every page as though it were your first volume. To you the problem is: What does this *add* to the others in facts and expression? And here comes the judicious *art of skipping*, or less concentrated attention, which is your real prerogative, and no insult to the author, always provided that your mind is managed.

I should like to hand each examinee a new book in his own subject, give him a limited time, and pose the question: "What are the main characteristics of this book, and its distinctive place in, or contribution to, the literature of the subject?" We should then see who had trained himself to face a practical world, with its welter of unmanageable units of knowledge, to come through the flood, not only unsubmerged, but with his hands full of intellectual treasure-trove of unimaginable value. Ernest Dimnet has said: "Whatever we read from intense curiosity gives us the model of how we should always read. Plodding along, page after page, with an equal attention to each word, results in attention to mere words."

I would add that the time saved in skipping or cursory reading of the mass of a book might well be spent in reading the special residue several times over. Putting thought into the arrangement of time and the stress of attention, as distinct from automatic reading, is management of mind. And the faculty will grow till it becomes part of the perfect routine.

It is a mistake to think that mere reading is an occupation of high value; it may have nothing more to be said for it than any other way of *passing* the time, and, therefore, may vary from zero to infinity in its value for the mind and character. But as no one can tell, when we have a book in our hands, what is happening between the printed page and our minds, we can often get away with more credit than we deserve. Reading is often a device for saving us from thinking, or even facing up to our responsibilities. In time, the brain becomes rather "jellified," as Dimnet puts it. Our most serious attempts at mastering what we read may be constantly hindered by adventitious images which we call distractions, leaving only a fraction of our consciousness available for what we read. Pop, in the strip pictures, was asked why he was reading when the wireless was on. He said, "to take my mind off the broadcast!" And when asked by the next person why the broadcast was on while he was reading, he said, "to take my mind off my book!" The habit of trying to get the best of two worlds, or to take too much in at once, is, perhaps, where the management of mind has a considerable scope.

If you could analyse the behaviour of the average man in a library, you would learn more about his character and management of mind than, perhaps, in any other way. It was said of de Talleyrand, "Nobody can talk like M. de Talleyrand in a library; he takes up a book and puts it down again, contradicts it, leaves it and returns to it, questions it as though it were a living thing, and this procedure both enriches his conversation with the profundity and the experience of the ages, and gives to the works in question a grace which their authors often lacked."

Having learned which is our best way of working, we then have to decide what we shall work on and how we shall divide our mental energies over the widest range of material with the most limited range of time. I have tried to answer this for myself in a recent book on *Ideals of a Student*. No doubt our calling and our aptitudes narrow the choice, but there is still always something

worth while for the mind to decide upon. I want to get it out of your heads that there is any waste of time, anything "unnatural," in spending a proportion of our efforts deciding our plan of campaign and our method. A famous airwoman once told me that she made the greatest distances not by pressing on, regardless of the machine, but by allotting a generous proportion of time for overhauling and studying that machine. I can assure you that in my business experience much the smaller percentage of one's time is taken up in arriving at decisions and arranging what *ought* to be done—the larger proportion must be devoted to negotiating that settlement with all the people affected—arguing, coaxing, outmanœuvring, stage-managing, and generally getting the machine of human contacts, with its conservatisms, its repulsions, its inertia, to adopt the new idea, not passively, but with that personal activity which alone can make it successful. One has to treat the mind in much the same way. I know that there are many who fuss about so much over how they are going to work, and what they are going to work on, that they never really get to the work itself. But I am assuming that the majority of us enjoy a temperament of activity and energy; at any rate, we feel that when we are *busy* we are doing something. But the best business is not "busyness," and everyone ought to have stretches of apparent idleness, with his slippered feet on the mantelpiece of his mind, contemplating his programme of work and the method of attack.

One of the spheres in which conscious management is most desirable is nowadays in our attitude towards the amount of time we are prepared to give to newspaper reading and to casual conversation. If you analyse the numerous evanescent impressions as you spend half an hour roaming over the pages of a newspaper, and ask what is the total effect upon the mind at the end of a week, and then compare that with a policy of going straight for some particular item and focussing attention upon it, you will see that reading newspapers has two meanings. Much the same may be said about casual conversation. There are many minds which are quite happy if they are constantly dribbling words in amiable exchange of superficial ideas. Why do so many people think that long pauses in conversation are boring, or evidences of mental inactivity? They may be a more important constituent part of the conversation than the words themselves. A foreign critic

has said that " Anglo-Saxons cannot realise how many chances for mental improvement they lose by their inveterate habit of keeping up six conversations when there are twelve people in the room " ; by which, of course, he meant that a general conversation might be a richer pool of ideas and influence. On the other hand, shy and uncommunicative people cannot give their best in a large group.

Without putting a constraint on the lighter sides of life, which are its salvation in these days, I would say that management of mind involves a routine that is serious and sustained, and that if the casual talk and cursory newspaper reading form too large a feature in that routine, there is room for revision and reinforcement. " De worst of dat nigger is he talk so much he ain't got no time to git no information."

Passing from the obtaining of knowledge to the formation of opinion, the management of mind becomes a more complex art. Have you ever taken the trouble to set out your view upon some subject—the English duty in India, the rights of minorities, total abstinence, gambling, the immortality of the soul, the feeding of school children, and then work back over the record of the way in which you reached that position—the books, the sermons, the debates, the evidence, the prejudices ? You will probably be surprised at the paucity of the material and the spasmodic character of the judgment, and unless you have an unusually objective mind you will be puzzled to unravel your own processes. William James, on Habit said : " Let him note for a period of a month all the intuitions he is aware of in his own and other lives and let him test their value in providing him with knowledge. Let him decide how far unsifted intuitions are reliable sources of knowledge."

Many people rely upon *debate* to bring out the pros and cons and settle the truth. I am afraid the non-intellectual elements are so prominent that it hinders rather than helps many minds. They are more engaged in the partisan aspects, in the joy of scoring and avoiding defeat, or in registering black or white when grey is the truth, than in a fair intellectual judgment.

The very form of debate, so admirably adapted to test weakness, and to challenge carelessly accepted fact or unbalanced argument, is not, unaided, a fine intellectual exercise. Even if it does not

engage passion, prejudice, or the *argumentum ad hominem*, it leaves the mind a great deal to do to produce a final result, and that needs aptitude or training. The mind is much like a jury after Counsel for plaintiff and defendant have finished and before the judge sums up. I have assumed that prejudice is easily put off. Baxter said : " For in a learning way men are ready to receive the truth, but in a disputing way they come armed against it with prejudice and animosity."

It is surprising how reluctant many people are to admit that they have no view upon a question, because they have not been fair to collection or consideration of evidence. There is something virile about positive people. Duff Cooper says of Polignac : " His mind was always made up, even when he had no idea what he was going to do."

Control of mental processes, like liberty, demands eternal vigilance : the formal steps need a meticulous overhaul. I should like every student to read a charming book by Professor Thouless of Glasgow University, called *Straight and Crooked Thinking*, and to perform the exercises he prescribes as often as possible. A recent writer on *Intellectual Honesty* (Mrs. Chance) says : " For a thousand who recognise and despise slovenly dress hardly one recognises and despises slovenly thought." After laboriously and correctly amassing knowledge, how easily it may all be spoilt by fallacious, careless or tendencious reasoning when it is finding its way into opinion and policy, and what is the use of it unless it *does* find its way ?

This brings me to the next phase of mental activity—the communication of our thought and knowledge to others. It is of small use to control the acquisition of knowledge, to manage the formation of one's opinions, if our power of meeting other minds is never examined or managed. In the *Dolly Dialogues* we learnt " telling the truth to people who misunderstand you is the same as promoting falsehood." What a difference there may be between two men, each of whom may have satisfied a technical expert examiner that his knowledge is first-class in honours, but one has also the gift of transmitting that knowledge to the minds of others. Does the degree adequately convey the power of mind ? Just as in the School Certificate examination a star is added to the credit for excellence in oral work, in French or German, so I should like to see something to mark the additional excellence of the

expositor, for he is better fulfilling the purposes of life. Exposition, of course, must vary with the mind of the hearer, and the expositor must put himself as far as possible into the position of the listener. To do this perfectly needs understanding, sympathy, detachment. This takes us into the realm of character, for no selfish or self-centred man could ever compass it. In my model examination the examiner would be called upon to expound certain features of his subject to a fifth form schoolboy, a railway guard, a country doctor, and an attractive typist respectively. Oh, no! the examiner would not judge the exposition! He would not hear it, but would examine the *victims*, the railway guard, the typist, etc., and see how much *they* knew, and that would test the quality of transmission and power of exposition of the unseen examinee. By their *fruits* ye shall know them!

To examine and account for the difference in the impression we actually create, from what we have set out to do, is a wonderful experience, as you will discover when you read a condensed report of your own speech. Manner and emphasis mean so much in management. "John Bright's distinction between his own and Gladstone's way of speaking deserves to be remembered. 'When I speak I strike across from headland to headland. Mr. Gladstone follows the coast-line, and when he comes to a navigable river he is unable to resist the temptation of tracing it to its source.'"

Lord Oxford tells us that Kinglake once made a great speech in the House that went perfectly flat. "Peel asked and obtained Kinglake's permission to borrow it for himself. Accordingly the next night Peel wound up his own speech with Kinglake's peroration. 'He had,' writes Mr. McCarthy, 'a commanding presence, splendid declamatory power, and a magnificent voice, capable of all variety of intonation and expression. He brought the House down with the sentences which, delivered by their real author the night before, had fallen dead upon the audience.' Probably a unique incident in the life of the House of Commons."

It is a great snare to our intellectual honesty that a very careful and well-balanced statement so often fails to arrest or even interest, and the more meritorious it is as an intellectual product the less ferment and appeal it possesses. It seems that we have to outline certain aspects heavily, to suppress qualifying detail which alone makes the statements true, to repeat, and even to exaggerate shape

or colour. The result upon *their* minds may be nearer to what we desire, and to the truth, than their reception of our better-balanced effort. If "*one*" is the truth, but we have to shout "*two*" to get the effect of "one" in the hearer's mind, the clever and critical people may accuse us of exaggeration and distortion, or that cardinal sin of taste—repetition. The reader or hearer may bring about the result either as a mental process of his own or because he is being convinced against his will, or fancies himself as a judicially minded person who must never accept any advocacy one hundred per cent. Newman once said: "I shall lead persons on a little way, while they fancy they are only taking the mean, and denounce me as the extreme. Thus all good is done (I do not say kept up) by going before people, and letting them fancy they are striking a balance . . . let me be thought extravagant, and yet be copied." When the thesis we pursue is silently condemning their error, it is best done in loneliness and silence than in challenge, especially where they are made to look foolish. Baxter said: "And I know not how hardly men's minds are changed from their former apprehensions, be the evidence never so plain. And I have perceived that nothing so much hindereth the reception of the truth as urging it on men with too harsh importunity, and falling too heavily on their errors. For hereby you engage their honour in the business and they defend their errors as themselves, and stir up all their wit and ability to oppose you."

Whether or not we *think* we are training our mind, its action is certainly being moulded through the kind of experience we have prescribed for it—an examination course, membership of a debating society, local preaching, the cursory day-to-day interest in current affairs. Graham Wallas said: "Students may be wisely told not to allow their reasoning to be distorted by political or personal partisanship—they are perhaps not so often told to avoid intellectual distortion by their desire to get a degree." Personally, I should take this risk a long way, especially if the degree syllabus is wisely chosen. But the concentration on the prescribed central features and the perspective of the subject may inhibit the imaginative and critical faculties, and even the artistic qualities of presentation. To know a little less for the examination room, but to use it freely every day in human relations, to "turn the placid summaries" of the notebooks into something which an ordinary newspaper critic

would accept as decent literature, may reawaken the examination-drugged imagination. For the highly organised mental exercise of reproducing the matter learned, in the form of examination answers, and even essays, is not strictly a mental activity of the first order, not an imaginative or creative exercise. The very form of the question paper, and having to read it closely through, in its way an excellent discipline, is inhibitory upon mental freedom. The successful examinee may be merely one who has "done a great deal of packing for a journey he never undertakes."

It has been said that education is what you have left when you have forgotten all you know. It is certainly the total effect of the knowledge and the process of close assimilation, and exposition, upon the powers of the mind. This is your own secret problem: no one else can solve it for you. You can never have knowledge, whatever you know, unless you heed the immortal words of the ancient philosopher and "*know thyself.*"

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